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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 001998

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W
STATE FOR EB/ESC/IEC/ENR/BLEVINE
STATE FOR DS/IP/AF
STAT FOR INR/AA
STATE PASS DOE FOR DAS JBRODMAN AND CGAY
STATE PASS TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS AND SRENENDER
STATE PASS DOC PHUPER
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/29/2009

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [CASC](#) [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#) [DELTAVIOLENCE](#)

SUBJECT: DELTA VIOLENCE UPDATE FOR SEPTEMBER 29

REF: A. LAGOS 1982

- [1](#)B. LAGOS 1978
- [1](#)C. ABUJA 1656
- [1](#)D. ABUJA 1486
- [1](#)E. LAGOS 1892
- [1](#)F. LAGOS 1820

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for Reasons 1.5 (B & D)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Given the significant international press coverage and the threats of Ijaw secession made by Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NPDVF) leader Alhaji Dokubo Asari, the National Council of State authorized President Obasanjo to take strong actions against Delta militants and any other groups that pose a threat to national security. There are mixed reports on whether GON military engaged any delta militants today. We continue to be in close contact with oil companies and AMCIIT wardens.

Security Update

[1](#)2. (C) The Council of State authorized President Obasanjo to "deal with persons or groups whose activities or utterances threaten the sovereignty" of the country. The authorization was hardly necessary as a practical matter. Obasanjo does not need the NCS imprimatur. However, it is symbolically important as it provides Obasanjo justification and political cover to handle the situation as he sees fit, which could include continuing and perhaps intensifying military operations if negotiations with Asari fail to yield dividends.

[1](#)3. (C) Shell Managing Director Basil Omiya told Consul General that the GON had opened discussions with the NPDVF. Omiya said initial read-outs from these discussions were positive. Oyimi added that fighters were seen returning to their villages. However, it is not clear whether they are returning to their villages for a brief rest before returning to the creeks or if they are laying down their arms. Meanwhile, Exxon Mobil reported on-going military operations against militants, possibly resulting in some fatalities.

Reports from the Energy Sector

[1](#)4. (C) Shell: Shell's Managing Director (MD) reported general quiet within the Port Harcourt city environs, with no discernible change in the security situation from yesterday. Shell's Director for External Relations confirmed press reports of closure of the Santa Barbara flow station yesterday, as Shell staff were unable to visit the station to correct a technical problem. This is the third Shell flow station affected by the security situation; stations at Soku and Ekulama were evacuated of non-essential staff, but still maintain production. Production losses from Santa Barbara were already included in the reduction of approximately 50,000 barrels/day reported yesterday.

[1](#)5. (C)AGIP/ENI: The General Manager (GM) for Public Affairs reported that AGIP has not evacuated any staff, despite threats by Asari against AGIP personnel. AGIP production remains normal. The GM indicated that AGIP maintains most of its flow stations in Bayelsa, with an additional two in Omuku and Ahoda. The editor of Nigerian publication, Oil and Gas monthly, told Consulate staff contrary to AGIP claims, he believes the company has begun evacuating some staff from the Delta region.

[1](#)6. (C) Chevron/Texaco: Chevron continues to monitor the security situation through its own security personnel and

through their contacts with Nigerian military on the ground. Although not dismissing the threats, Chevron believes Asari is more bluster than anything else. Nevertheless, Chevron is taking precautions. Chevron gauges that Asari does not enjoy widespread popular support. Chevron senses no agitation in the communities near its operations. (Comment: Human Rights NGOs and some other civil society groups maintain Asari enjoys considerable popular support. They agree with Chevron's assertion that Asari has been adept at manipulating the international media. End Comment). For October 1, the first day of the Asari's threat, Chevron has ordered all employees to work from home, but it expects to resume normal business operations the following business day.

17. (C) Exxon Mobil: Exxon Mobil MD informed Consulate Lagos that their local contacts reported some skirmishes between the GON and militants in the riverine areas today, possibly resulting in some fatalities. Exxon/Mobil has issued a communiqué, advising all employees to exercise caution and minimize travel, with a complete travel ban in the areas affected by the military operation. Exxon/Mobil plans to meet September 30 to review its threat assessment level, currently at level three in a four-tiered system. There has been no change in the company's production level.

18. (C) Halliburton: Acting Halliburton Security Director and Facility Manager for Port Harcourt confirmed no changes in Halliburton's security assessment. He believes the media reports are exaggerating the threat. He notes that rebel activities are restricted to the creeks and waterways, not the city of Port Harcourt. Energy company security officers in Port Harcourt will meet later today to compare notes on a rally planned for October 1 by the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) to protest the recent fuel hikes and the wider security situation.

19. (C) Tidex: The MD for Tidex, an oil service company (OSC) which runs large boat operations for Chevron and other majors in the Port Harcourt, noted that there is increased tension in the area, but said he saw nothing to suggest that expatriates are being specifically targeted. On any given day, TIDEX has 10-25 AMCs in the Port Harcourt area.

110. (C) Panalpina: Panalpina Oil and Gas Sales Manager stated that his Port Harcourt office reported much higher mobilizations of soldiers on the outskirts of Port Harcourt. His staff had counted at least 40 armored personnel carriers being mobilized on heavy lorries. He believes that military activity has escalated in the area since 21 September. Panalpina Manager noted that his staff, like many energy sector employees, are generally staying on their compounds, and taking precautions such as carrying radios when venturing out. Panalpina is updating its evacuation plans to evacuate their personnel by water, if necessary.

111. (U) Coopers Cameron: Coopers Cameron Manager reported no significant changes since yesterday.

ACS Update

112. (SBU) There have been no reports of any incidents involving Americans.

Press

113. (C) Several local journalists have informed us that some media houses have been pressured by government officials, including Rivers State Governor Odili to reduce their coverage on the Port Harcourt situation. This may have caused some self-censorship. Now that the story is being covered in the international media, local media is reporting more on it. Nonetheless, Oil Watch Africa, an NGO that monitors the energy industry, reported that local newspapers carried mostly wire reports on the story, and did not seem to be doing independent coverage. Oil Watch Africa reported that local television in Port Harcourt is not reporting on the situation.

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